



*Serving the Iowa Legislature*

## PARTICIPATION IN MAKING IOWA LAWS

***The state Senator and state Representative from each district are elected to represent constituent interests when making the laws of Iowa. Citizens can take part in the decisions made by those elected officials.***

For locating constituent Senators and Representatives, or to learn more about the Iowa Legislature, contact the Legislative Information Office (LIO). Search the web using *Find Your Legislator* on the Iowa General Assembly web site: [www.legis.iowa.gov](http://www.legis.iowa.gov)

E-mail: [lioinfo@legis.state.ia.us](mailto:lioinfo@legis.state.ia.us)

Legislative Information Office – Room G16

Legislative Services Agency

Iowa State Capitol, Des Moines, Iowa 50319

Telephone: 515-281-5129

Contact Senators during the legislative session at the Capitol by calling the Senate Switchboard at 515-281-3371, or address mail to the Iowa Senate, State Capitol, Des Moines, IA 50319. Contact Representatives during the session at the Capitol by calling the House Switchboard at 515-281-3221, or address mail to the Iowa House of Representatives, State Capitol, Des Moines, IA 50319. The Iowa General Assembly web site lists e-mail addresses of all legislators, or call the LIO.

- Legislators may also be contacted at their homes (call the LIO or check listings on the Iowa General Assembly web site). The Iowa Constitution requires the legislative sessions of each General Assembly to convene yearly on the second Monday in January. Adjournment usually comes at the end of April. During the legislative session, both the Senate and House have operators on duty to take phone calls and relay messages to legislators. Any citizen visiting the Capitol can arrange to meet with legislators.
- Observe the session. The debates may be viewed from galleries in the Senate and House chambers. The public may attend committee meetings and public hearings on legislation. Live audio of the Senate and House debates is available on the Iowa General Assembly web site.

### Committee Work

The first part of the session is devoted to committee meetings. All bills that are debated must be approved by committee. A standing committee is a group of legislators that review all bills relating to a specific subject area. Once a bill is assigned to a committee, the committee chairperson appoints a subcommittee. The subcommittee, usually composed of three members of the standing committee, reviews the bill in detail and reports its conclusions to the full committee. The full committee then discusses the subcommittee's conclusions and makes recommendations to the entire chamber. The committee may recommend to pass the bill, to pass the bill with amendment, to refer the bill to another committee for study, to postpone the bill indefinitely, or to send the bill to the floor for debate with no recommendation.

## **Debate**

When debate on a bill is finished, the bill's title is read aloud to the chamber for the third and final time. If a constitutional majority (at least 26 Senators and 51 Representatives) votes to pass the bill, it moves to the other chamber. If fewer legislators than a constitutional majority vote to pass the bill, the bill fails. If the bill is then approved by a constitutional majority vote it is delivered to the other chamber.

## **Second Passage**

Amendments adopted by the chamber of origin become part of the bill before it is sent to the other chamber. As the bill proceeds through the Legislature, the procedure in both chambers is basically the same. A bill introduced in the Senate will retain its original Senate number as it travels through the House and a bill introduced in the House will retain its original House number as it travels through the Senate. If the bill is further amended by the other chamber, the amended bill is sent back to the chamber of origin for approval. If the chamber of origin concurs or agrees with the amendment(s), the bill has passed both chambers in identical form and will be sent to the Governor for review. If the chamber of origin refuses to concur with the other chamber's amendment(s), the bill is returned to the other chamber, which may recede from or insist upon their amended version of the bill. If they recede, the bill is sent to the Governor; however, if they insist upon their amendment(s), a conference committee is appointed to work out the differences.

## **Conference Committee**

Conference committees are composed of Senate and House members representing both the majority and minority parties and both sides of the issue in dispute. The 10 members of a conference committee are appointed by the Senate Majority Leader and the Speaker of the House to study the points of disagreement between the chambers in an attempt to reach a compromise. If an agreement is reached, it is presented to both chambers in a report that contains the compromise version of the bill. The report cannot be amended by either chamber. If the report is rejected by either chamber, a second conference committee may be appointed. If no agreement is reached, the bill fails. If the conference committee report is adopted, the chambers again vote on the bill. If the bill is approved it will be enrolled and sent to the Governor for review.

Final preparation of a bill before it is sent to the Governor is called enrollment. When both chambers have passed the bill in the same form, it is prepared with all approved amendments incorporated. After the bill is enrolled, the President of the Senate and the Speaker of the House sign the enrolled version and the Secretary of the Senate or Chief Clerk of the House certifies that the bill originated in that chamber. The bill is then sent to the Governor for final action.

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